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Department considering various means of improving understanding of Berlin

issue among African and Asian neutrals with view to enlisting from them greater degree of support.

We are disturbed that Soviets by intensive propaganda campaign are spreading impression (a) that peace treaty with East Germany would mean end, rather than new beginning, of period of tension and (b) that West is responding with threats to Soviet efforts to bring peace to Central Europe. While it is easy to refute such contentions when talking with persons who have necessary background to understand real issues involved, it is of course much more difficult to penetrate minds that look upon issue essentially as quarrel between white people. Also some neutrals are disposed to accept protestations of Soviet peaceful intentions because to them West is still identified with heritage of colonialism and imperialism.

Among means of meeting this problem we are considering possibility

suggesting that Mayor of Berlin invite selected number African and Asian neutral opinion leaders to visit both East Berlin and West Berlin, to be briefed, and make independent observations on life on both sides of demarcation

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demarcation line. Integral part invitation would be statement invitees would be absolutely free and would in fact be encouraged to get full picture on both sides. We recognize this might involve some risk because slogans and terminology of East Germans might make special impression on some neutrals, but believe on balance advantage would clearly lie with West Berlin particularly if reception of group or groups were really well prepared. (We assume this would rule out visits until sometime after elections.) Among African opinion leaders fair proportion would doubtless embark upon trip with favorable disposition toward West Berlin's case, which might also rub off on others.

While invitation and reception would of course have to be entirely West Berlin show, we would think it no handicap politically (at least as far as Africans are concerned) if we offered support in terms air transportation for invitees since all would be aware from beginning that US completely supports FRG position on Berlin issue. In this manner trips might be handled as package tours taking minimum of time, which in turn should enable number of otherwise unavailable key Afro-Asian opinion leaders to be brought to Berlin. To be successful, such project would have to have also understanding and support of UK and France especially in case of African countries where they have special interests.

Your comments on this idea invited.

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(WST)

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